BURNING DAYLIGHT

By JACK LONDON

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SYNOPSIS.

Elam Harnish, known all through Alaska as "Burning Daylight," celebrates his 40th birthday with a crowd of miners at the Circle City Tivoli. The dance leads to heavy gambling, in which over $100,000 is staked. Harnish loses his money and his mine but wins the mail contract. He starts on his mail trip with dogs and sledge, telling his friends that he will be in the big Yukon gold strike at the start.

CHAPTER II.—Continued.

"Of course he'll make it," Kearns whispered in Bettles' ear. "And there's five hundred Daylight's back in sixty days," he added aloud.

Billy Rawlins closed with the wager, and Bettles hugged Kearns ecstatically.

"By Yupiter, I ban take that bet," Olaf Henderson said, dragging Daylight away from Bettles and Kearns.

"Winner pays!" Daylight shouted, closing the wager. "And I'm sure going to win, and sixty days is a long time between drinks, so I pay now. Name your brand, you hochinoos! Name your brand!"

Somebody opened the outer door. A vague gray light filtered in.

"Burning Daylight, Burning Daylight," some one called warningly.

Daylight paused for nothing, heading for the door and pulling down his ear-flaps. Kama stood outside by the sled, a long, narrow affair, sixteen inches wide and seven and a half feet in length, its slatted bottom raised six inches above the steel-shod runners. On it, lashed with thongs of moose hide, were the light canvas bags that contained the mail, and the food and gear for dogs and men. In front of it, in a single line, lay curled five frost-rimmed dogs. They were huskies, matched in size and color, all unusually large and all gray. From their cruel jaws to their bushy tails they were as like as peas in their likeness to timber wolves. Wolves they were, domesticated, it was true, but wolves in appearance and in all their characteristics. On top the sled load, thrust under the lashings and ready for immediate use, were two pairs of snowshoes. Daylight was saying good-by to those who clustered around him. The Virgin wanted to kiss him, and, fuddled slightly though he was with the whisky, he saw his way out without compromising with the apron-string. He kissed the Virgin, but he kissed the other three women with equal partiality. He pulled on his long mittens, roused the dogs to their feet, and took his place at the gee-pole.

"Mush, you beauties!" he cried.

The animals threw their weights against their breastbands on the instant, crouching low to the snow and digging in their claws. They whined eagerly, and before the sled had gone half a dozen lengths both Daylight and Kama (in the rear) were running to keep up. And so, running, man and dogs dipped over the bank and down to the frozen bed of the Yukon, and in the gray light were gone. On the river, where was a packed trail and where snowshoes were unnecessary, the dogs averaged six miles an hour. To keep up with them, the two men were compelled to run. Daylight and Kama relieved each other regularly at the gee-pole, for here was the hard work of steering the flying sled and of keeping in advance of it. The man relieved dropped behind the sled, occasionally leaping upon it and resting. As if through a wall, Daylight had passed from the hum and roar of the Tivoli into another world—a world of silence and immobility. Nothing stirred. The Yukon slept under a coat of ice three feet thick.

The cold snap continued. Only men of iron kept the trail at such low temperatures, and Kama and Daylight were picked men of their races. But Kama knew the other was the better man, and thus, at the start, he was himself foredoomed to defeat. Not that he slackened his effort or willingness by the slightest degree, but that he was beaten by the burden he carried in his mind. His attitude toward Daylight was worshipful. Stoical, taciturn, proud of his physical prowess, he found all these qualities incarnated in his white companion.

CHAPTER III.

At Sixty Mile they restocked provisions, added a few pounds of letters to their load, and held steadily on. From Forty Mile they had unbroken trail, and they could look forward only to unbroken trail clear to Dyea. Daylight stood it magnificently, but the killing pace was beginning to tell on Kama. His pride kept his mouth shut, but the result of the chilling of his lungs in the cold snap could not be concealed. They traveled till ten o'clock the night they reached Selkirk, and at six next morning they plunged ahead into the next stretch of wilderness of nearly five hundred miles that lay between Selkirk and Dyea. There was no let-up in his pace. Twelve hours a day, six in the twilight and six in the dark, they toiled on the trail. Three hours were consumed in cooking, repairing harnesses, and making and breaking camp, and the remaining nine hours dogs and men slept as if dead.

The time came when Kama was unable to go in the lead and break trail, and it was proof that he was far gone when he permitted Daylight to toil all day at the heavy snowshoe work. Lake by lake they crossed the string of lakes from Marsh to Linderman, and began the ascent of Chilcoot. By all rights Daylight should have camped below the last pitch of the pass at the dim end of day; but he kept on and over and down to Sheep Camp, while behind him raged a snow storm that would have delayed him twenty-four hours. This last excessive strain broke Kama completely. In the morning he could not travel. At five, when called, he sat up after a struggle, groaned, and sank back again. Daylight did the camp work of both, harnessed the dogs, and, when ready for the start, rolled the helpless Indian in all three sleeping robes and lashed him on top of the sled. The going was good; they were on their last lap; and he raced the dogs down through Dyea canyon and along the hard-packed trail that led to Dyea post. And running still, Kama groaning on top the load, and Daylight leaping at the gee-pole to avoid going under the runners of the flying sled, they arrived at Dyea by the sea. True to his promise, Daylight did not stop. An hour's time saw the sled loaded with the ingoing mail and grub, fresh dogs harnessed and a fresh Indian engaged. Kama never spoke from the time of his arrival till the moment Daylight, ready to depart, stood beside him to say good-by. They shook hands.

"You kill um dat damn Indian," Kama said. "Savvee, Daylight? You kill um."

"He'll sure last as far as Pelly," Daylight grinned.

Kama shook his head doubtfully, and rolled over on his side, turning his back in token of farewell.

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A crowd filled the Tivoli—the old crowd that had seen Daylight depart two months before; for this was the night of the sixtieth day, and opinion was divided as ever as to whether or not he would compass the achievement. At ten o'clock bets were still being made, though the odds rose, bet by bet, against his success. Dowr in her heart the Virgin believed he had failed, yet she made a bet of twenty ounces with Charley Bates, against forty ounces, that Daylight would arrive before midnight.

She it was who heard the first yelps of the dogs.

"Listen!" she cried. "It's Daylight!"

There was a general stampede for the door; but when the double storm-doors were thrown wide open, the crowd fell back. They heard the eager whining of dogs, the snap of a dog-whip and the voice of Daylight crying encouragement as the weary animals capped all they had done by dragging the sled in over the wooden floor. They came in with a rush, and with them rushed in the frost, a visible vapor of smoking white, through which their heads and backs showed, as they strained in the harness, till they had all the seeming of swimming in a river. Behind them, at the gee-pole, came Daylight, hidden to the knees by the swirling frost through which he appeared to wade. He was the same old Daylight, withal lean and tired-looking, and his black eyes were sparkling and flashing brighter than ever. His parka of cotton drill hooded him like a monk, and fell in straight lines to his knees. Grimed and scorched by camp-smoke and fire, the garment in itself told the story of his trip. A two-months' beard covered his face; and the beard, in turn, was matted with the ice of his breathing through the long seventy-mile run.

He experienced a thrill of surprise as the roar of welcome went up and as every familiar detail of the Tivoli greeted his vision—the long bar and the array of bottles, the gambling games, the big stove, the weigher at the gold-scales, the musicians, the men and women, the Virgin, Celia, and Nellie, Dan MacDonald, Bettles, Billy Rawlins, Olaf Henderson, Doc Watson—all of them. It was just as he had left it, and in all seeming it might well be the very day he had left. The sixty days of incessant travel through the white wilderness suddenly telescoped, and had no existence in time. They were a moment, an incident. He had plunged out and into them through the wall of silence, and back through the wall of silence he had plunged, apparently the next instant, and into the roar and turmoil of the Tivoli.

He drew a deep breath and cried: "The winner pays, and I'm the winner, ain't I? Surge up, you-all Malemutes and Siwashes, and name your poison! There's your Dyea mail, straight from Salt Water, and no hornswoggiin about it! Cast the lashings adrift, you-all, and wade into it!"

A dozen pairs of hands were at the sled-lashings, when the young Le Barge Indian, bending at the same task, suddenly and limply straightened up. In his eyes was a great surprise. He stared about him wildly, for the thing he was undergoing was new to him. He was profoundly struck by an unguessed limitation. He shook as with a palsy, and he gave at the knees, slowly sinking down to fall suddenly across the sled and to know the smashing blow of darkness across his consciousness.

"Exhaustion," said Daylight. "Take him off and put him to bed, some of you-all. He's sure a good Indian."

A few minutes later, Daylight was whirling around the dance-floor, waltzing with the Virgin. And small wonder it was that the Virgin yielded herself to his arms, as they danced dance after dance, and sick at heart at the knowledge that he found nothing in her more than a good friend and an excellent dancer. Small consolation it was to know that he never loved any woman. She was sick with love of him, and he danced with her as he would dance with any woman, as he would dance with a man who was a good dancer and upon whose arm was tied a handkerchief to conventionalize him into a woman.

At one in the morning he saw Elijah Davis herding Henry Finn and Joe Hines, the lumber-jack, toward the door. Daylight interfered.

"Where are you-all going?" he demanded, attempting to draw them to the bar.

"Bed," Elijah Davis answered.

"Got to," Joe Hines added apologetically. "We're mushing out in the mornin'."

Daylight still detained them.

"Where to? What's the excitement?"

"No excitement," Elijah explained. "We're just a-goin' to play your hunch, an' tackle the Upper Country. Don't you want to come along?"

"I sure do," Daylight affirmed.

But the question had been put in fun, and Elijah ignored the acceptance.

"We're tacklin' the Stewart," he went on. "Al Mayo told me he seen some likely lookin' bars first time he come down the Stewart, and we're goin' to sample 'em while the river's froze. You listen, Daylight, an' mark my words, the time's comin' when winter diggin's 'll be all the go. There'll be men in them days that'll laugh at our summer scratchin' an' ground-wallerin'."

Elijah laughed, gathered his two partners up, and was making a second attempt to reach the door.

"Hold on," Daylight called. "I sure mean it."

The three men turned back suddenly upon him, in their faces surprise, delight, and incredulity.

"G'wan, you're foolin'," said Finn, the other lumber-jack, a quiet, steady, Wisconsin man.

"There's my dawgs and sled," Daylight answered. "That'll make two teams and halve the loads; though we-all 'll have to travel easy for a spell, for them dawgs is sure tired."

The three men were overjoyed, but still a trifle incredulous.

"Now look here," Joe Hines blurted out, "none of your foolin', Daylight. We mean business. Will you come?" Daylight extended his hand and shook.

The Time Came When Kama Was Unable to Go In the Lead.

CHAPTER IV.

This time the trail was easier. It was better packed, and they were not carrying mail against time. At Forty Mile they laid over two days for the sake of the dogs, and at Sixty Mile Daylight's team was left with the trader. Unlike Daylight, after the terrible run from Selkirk to Circle City, they had been unable to recuperate on the back trail. So the four men pulled on from Sixty Mile with a fresh team of dogs on Daylight's sled. The following night they camped in the cluster of islands at the mouth of the Stewart. Daylight talked town sites, and, though the others laughed at him, he staked the whole maze of high, wooded island.

"Just supposing the big strike does come on the Stewart," he argued. "Mebbe you-all 'll be in on it, and then again mebbe you-all won't. But I sure will. You-all 'd better reconsider and go in with me on it."

But they were stubborn.

"You're as bad as Harper and Joe Ladue," said Joe Hines. "They're always at that game. You know that big flat jest below the Klondike and under Moosehide Mountain? Well, the recorder at Forty Mile was tellin' me they staked that not a month ago—The Harper & Ladue Town Site. Ha! Ha! Ha!"

Elijah and Finn joined in his laughter; but Daylight was gravely in earnest.

"There she is!" he cried. "The hunch is working! It's in the air, I tell you-all! What'd they-all stake the big flat for if they-all didn't get the hunch? Wish I'd staked it."

The regret in his voice was provocative of a second burst of laughter.

"Laugh, dang you, laugh! Why your eyes ain't open yet. You-all are a bunch of little mewing kittens. I tell you-all if that strikes come on Klondike, Harper and Ladue will be millionaires. And if it comes on Stewart, you-all watch the Elam Harnish town site boom. In them days, when you-all come around makin' poor mouths . . ." He heaved a sigh of resignation. "Well, I suppose I'll have to give you-all a grub-stake or soup, or something or other."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Loud and Soft Pedal.

Remember to do your grumbling in a whisper. Save your megaphone for praises—it was invented to advertise good things, anyhow.

Bars Out Russian Geese

Germany's Blow to a Great Trade Seriously Felt on Both Sides of Border.

Announcement has been made that the German authorities have suspended the importation of live geese from Russia on the ground that there is a considerable amount of disease prevalent in the frontier districts of that country.

Coming, as this prohibition does, immediately prior to the period when imports of live geese increase rapidly the question is serious alike to breeders in Russia, who will have large quantities of birds thrown on their hands; to German goose fatteners, as they will be unable to fill up their pens, for the home production is totally insufficient to meet their requirements, and to housewives in Germany, who will find the already high price of what is an important article of food advance still further and probably be prohibitive. Russians state that there is no justification for this regulation, that it is a trade move in the interests of German dealers to force down prices and as a measure of fiscal protection to German breeders.

Germany imports annually about 8,000,000 live geese, of which seven-eighths come from Russia, where these birds are bred in vast numbers throughout the western and southwestern governments. They are bought from the raisers by traveling dealers, who drive them in huge flocks to the frontier stations, where they are entrained for despatch to Berlin and other cities.

The cars used for this purpose are built in four decks, each car holding about 1,200 birds. Special trains are run in the season, consisting of a dozen to thirty-five cars, in accordance with the supply. As many as 50,000 geese have been known to arrive at Magerviehhof market, Berlin, on a single day.—Westminster Gazette.

Didn't Go Crazy Over It.

The inhabitants of Ione St. Kilda heard the gramophone the other day for the first time. A steamer belonging to Messrs. McCallum of Glasgow touched at the island, and it was one of the passengers, Mr. Louis Barbe, who had the distinction of taking the first gramophone to the island. The stolid St. Kildean, however, failed to display the wide-mouthed wonder which was expected of him.

REACHED LIMIT OF TORTURE

Real Reason Why Burglar Gave Evening Papers Chance to Use Effective Headline.

A burglar broke into a New York mansion early the other morning and found himself after wandering about the place in the music room. Hearing footsteps approaching, he took refuge behind a screen. From eight to nine the eldest daughter had a singing lesson. From nine to ten the second daughter took a piano lesson. From 10 to 11 the eldest son got his instruction on the violin. From 11 to 12 the younger boy got a lesson on the flute and piccolo. Then at 12:15, the family got together and practiced music on all their instruments. They were fixing up for a concert. At 12:45 the porch-climber staggered from behind the screen. "For heaven's sake, send for the police!" he shrieked. "Torture me no longer!" And in the evening paper there was the headline: "Nervy Children Capture Desperate Burglar."

A Fright.

"Lady," said Meandering Mike, "would you lend me a cake of soap?"

"Do you mean to tell me you want soap?"

"Yes'm. Me partner's got de hiccups an' I want to scare him."

Man and Meter Both Unique.

A Kansas City man notified the gas company that his meter was running slow. Greater honesty hath no man than this.

The easiest thing in the world to make light of is a ton of coal.

TANTALIZING.

Goat—Gee, if de wind would stop blowin' I'd get a good, square meal.

No Jury.

"Didn't you give that man a jury trial?"

"Look here," said Broncho Bob, "there ain't a big lot o' men in this settlement. We couldn't possibly git 12 of 'em together without startin' a fatal argument about somethin' that had nothin' whatever to do with the case."

Ingredients of Life.

The ingredients of health and long life are great temperance, open air, easy labor and little care.—Philip Sidney.

Before the Scrap.

"Why are you rushing around so today?" "I'm trying to get something for my wife." "Had any offers?"—Louisville Courier-Journal.

Walking for Nerves.

The nerves suffer from want of pure oxygen. They run like a network all through the skin and when they are overwrought the skin is apt to be dry and colorless. Walking is an excellent tonic for the nerves. It gives them strength to control themselves.

If one has means or leisure, there are plenty of other more enjoyable exercises. But few forms are so beneficial as the regular daily jaunt of four or five miles for obtaining a good complexion.

Had to Put in Human Interest.

An old negro preacher, says the Atlanta Constitution, gave as his text: "De tree is known by its fruit, an' it's des impossible to shake de possum down."

After the benediction an old brother said to him:

"I never knowed befo' dat sich a text wuz in de Bible."

"Well," admitted the preacher, "it ain't set down dat way. I throwed in de possum to hit de intelligence of my congregation!"

Treacherous Memory.

Parson Johnson—Yo' must nevah cherish an enmity against youh neighbor, Mis Jackson. If youh neighbor does you an injury you must forget it.

Mis Jackson—An' so I does forget it, pahson—but I'se got a powerful bad memory, and I keeps forgetting dat I'se forgotten it.

Why They Scout.

Mrs. Forward—And so two of your sons are Boy Scouts? Where do they do their reconnoitering?

Mrs. Howard—In our refrigerator.—Life.